

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

In the Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A near field light generating device, comprising:
a light emitting element that emits light from its exit surface; and
a thin film disposed on the exit surface,
wherein the thin film is configured to ~~transmit light~~ release emitted light as near field light from an area of the thin film when the thin film is irradiated with light from said light emitting element and to block light from the area of the thin film when the thin film is not irradiated with light from said light emitting element.
2. (Currently Amended) A near field light generating device according to Claim 1, wherein said thin film changes its state from a crystalline state to an amorphous state when irradiated with light from said light emitting element.
3. (Previously Presented) A near field light generating device according to Claim 1, wherein said thin film returns to a crystalline state from an amorphous state when the light emission is stopped.
4. (Currently Amended) A near field light generating device according to Claim 1, wherein said thin film ~~essentially~~ consists essentially of an inorganic material having a melting point of 350°C or lower.
5. (Currently Amended) A near field light generating device according to Claim 1, wherein said thin film ~~essentially~~ consists essentially of an inorganic material having a melting point of 150°C or lower.

6. (Currently Amended) A near field light generating device according to Claim 1, wherein said thin film ~~essentially~~ consists essentially of an organic material having a low melting point.

7. (Previously Presented) A near field light generating device according to Claim 1, further comprising a heat diffusion preventing film between the light exit surface and the thin film.

8. (Currently Amended) A near field light generating device according to Claim 1, wherein said light emitting element includes a semiconductor laser device.

9. (Currently Amended) A near field light generating device, comprising:
a light emitting element that emits light from its exit surface; and
a thin film disposed on the exit surface,
wherein the thin film is configured to ~~transmit light~~ release emitted light as near field light from an area of the thin film when the thin film is heated and to block light from the area of the thin film when the thin film is not heated.

10. (Currently Amended) A near field light generating device according to Claim 9, wherein said thin film changes its state from a crystalline state to an amorphous state when heated.

11. (Previously Presented) A near field light generating device according to Claim 9, wherein said thin film returns to a crystalline state from an amorphous state when the light emission is stopped.

12. (Currently Amended) A near field light generating device according to Claim 9, wherein said thin film ~~essentially~~ consists essentially of an inorganic material having a melting point of 350°C or lower.

13. (Currently Amended) A near field light generating device according to Claim 9, wherein said thin film ~~essentially~~ consists essentially of an inorganic material having a melting point of 150°C or lower.

14. (Currently Amended) A near field light generating device according to Claim 1, wherein said thin film ~~essentially~~ consists essentially of an organic material having a low melting point.

15. (Previously Presented) A near field light generating device according to Claim 9, further comprising a heat diffusion preventing film between the light exit surface and the thin film.

16. (Currently Amended) A near field light generating device according to Claim 9, wherein said light emitting element includes a semiconductor laser device.

17. (Original) A near field light generating device according to Claim 9, wherein said thin film is heated by the light emitted from said light emitting element.